

Opening Statement of  
The Honorable Ken Calvert, Ranking Republican  
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics  
May 2, 2007

***NASA's Space Science Programs:  
Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Request and Issues***

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for scheduling today's hearing on NASA's Space Science program, and my sincere thanks to our witnesses for taking time from their busy schedules to join us this morning and share their views and recommendations.

As everyone in this room well knows, NASA is an extraordinary agency that at a relatively small cost to the taxpayer has produced science discoveries that have transformed man's view of the universe around us, and has also demonstrated that man can live and work in space. The pace and scope of science discoveries over the last decade has been breath-taking; dark energy, dark matter, extra-solar planets, evidence of water on Mars, to name but a few.

Yet despite the fact that funding for NASA science missions is roughly 32% of the agency's budget (including Earth Science), hovering near an historical high relative to the overall agency budget, the tempo of new discoveries and capabilities that we've recently enjoyed are at serious risk of tapering off for a variety of well understood reasons –

- mission costs have far exceeded early projections;
- until Mike Griffin's arrival as Administrator, NASA was developing too many missions for the resources it had available, forcing the agency to stretch out schedules to stay within budget, and delaying the pace of new starts;
- cost uncertainties of launching small and medium-sized payloads after the Delta II is retired; and
- mission assurance and accounting changes.

Everyone in this room understands that severe budget challenges are also confronting NASA in its manned spaceflight and aeronautics research programs, forcing the agency to remove future budget growth from the science mission directorate in order to address more pressing needs, and I don't fault NASA for making the tough choices it did.

But it shouldn't be that way. I have stated before, and I'll say it again, that the Administration must provide NASA with realistic budget requests to match resources with program content. Otherwise, bad things happen, and the balance among NASA's programs becomes imperiled as the agency moves resources around to fund priorities, and it invites Congress – and this is not a good thing – to begin imposing its own preferences.

NASA Administrator Mike Griffin is doing an exceptional job leading the agency. He has set priorities, and while everyone in the room may not agree with his decisions, he has not attempted to be disingenuous and hasn't disguised his rationale.

NASA's science enterprise leads the world in the quest for human understanding of the cosmos, our solar system, and indeed, our home planet. The strength of the agency's science program is rooted in its close working relationship with the science community.

Our witnesses today will provide us with their best guidance on how NASA and Congress can address the challenges confronting the science community to ensure a return to a robust mission tempo and ensure a strong cadre of scientists and engineers to propose and design future missions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and my thanks again to our witnesses.